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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet on boards and committees is the fourteenth of 16 in a series to provide leaders in adult activities with sound introductory material to give practical help in using a method of adult education or working in a particular area. Its objective is to give practical help to board members and executives on applying democratic principles in the operation of boards and committees. Six articles and how-tos are included. "A Look at Human Organization" places boards and committees in the context of human organization and brings findings of modern social science to bear on development of a better understanding of the human element in organizational life. "Improving Organizational Leadership" presents three case examples of attempts to improve leadership with special attention to the problem of spotting and developing new leadership. A theory article on "Creative Board Leadership" is followed by two practical presentations, "Building Committees That Work" and "The Group at Work," which translate principles of democratic organization into step-by-step procedures for effective committee operation. "Advice on Advisory Committees" discusses their importance, uses and abuses, dangers, and suggestions for organizing and running them. (YLB)

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Leadership Pamphlet #14

A practical aid to leaders in education, government, welfare, health, farm, labor, religion, industry, and the community...

BETTER BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

An easy-to-use manual for board members and executives featuring:

.Modern theories about the role of boards and committees

.Case studies of boards in operation

.Guides and checklists for improving the work of boards and committees

.The special use of advisory committees

Adult Education Association of the U.S.A.

Leadership Pamphlets are prepared and distributed by the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A. Each pamphlet provides leaders in adult activities with sound introductory material which can give practical help in using an important method of adult education or working in a particular area with insight and skill.

Pamphlets in this series are:

1. How to Lead Discussions
2. Planning Better Programs
3. Taking Action in the Community
4. Understanding How Groups Work
5. How to Teach Adults
6. How to Use Role Playing and Other Tools for Learning
7. Supervision and Consultation
8. Training Group Leaders
9. Conducting Workshops and Institutes
10. Working with Volunteers
11. Conferences that Work
12. Getting and Keeping Members
13. Effective Public Relations
14. Better Boards and Committees
15. Streamlining Parliamentary Procedure

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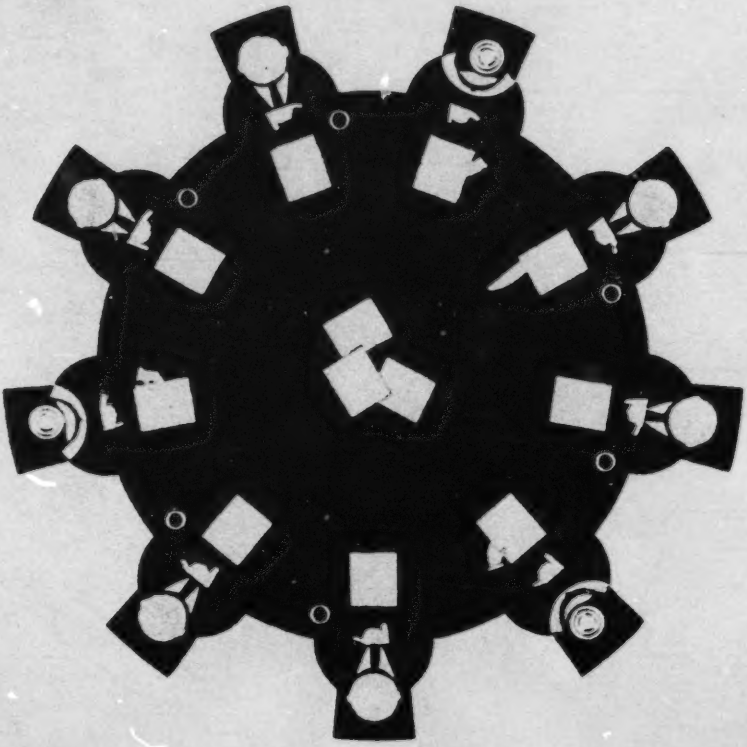

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INTRODUCTION

The modern conception of adult education is not limited to formal teaching in a classroom. Indeed, for most adults most of their continuing education takes place in the course of living experiences. One of the missions of adult education as an organized movement, therefore, is to make living experiences more educative.

One of the living experiences common to a multitude of American citizens is participation on boards and committees. In a sense, these are our laboratories of democracy—in which we learn our habits of civic behavior. All too often, unfortunately, the habits we learn are more appropriate to an autocratic society. For under the pressure of "getting things done" many boards and committees have rationalized themselves into authoritarian ways of working.

The authors of this pamphlet attempt to restore democratic principles to the operation of boards and committees and to give practical help in using them to get things done efficiently.

The opening article places boards and committees in the context of human organization. It brings the findings of modern social science to bear on the development of a better understanding of the human element in organizational life. The pamphlet then moves into three actual case examples of attempts to improve organizational leadership, with special attention to the problem of spotting and developing new leadership. The stream then flows on to a theory article on "Creative Board Leadership" followed by two practical presentations, "Building Committees that Work" and "The Group at Work," which translate principles of democratic organization into step-by-step procedures for effective committee operation. The pamphlet closes with a special note of advice about using advisory committees.

While these articles have been drawn from several different issues of ADULT LEADERSHIP, they have a consistency of philosophy which causes the pamphlet to hang together as if written by a single author. Obviously, this pamphlet does not say everything that could be said about boards and committees, so that the reader is urged to do the further reading suggested on the inside of the back cover. We hope, however, that the ideas and practical tools contained in this little booklet will prove helpful in starting board and committee members on a process of self-education in better board and committee work. That would be a real contribution to democracy.

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A Look at Human Organization

A STORY, probably a fable, went the rounds in educational circles a few years ago. According to the story, a group of teachers went to see the superintendent of schools in his office. They had come to ask why several faculty committees which had long since ceased to produce, in some cases even to meet, were appointed or reappointed year after year. The administrator became angry and red-faced as they pressed him for convincing reasons. Finally, pounding the desk, he shouted his answer. "There isn't any reason for those committees. They're just part of our policy."

This superintendent might have been instead the president of a women's club and the visitors members of the club asking the why of a corresponding secretary who has no correspondence to write. Or the questioners might have been staff members in a welfare agency quizzing their executive about the justification for an agency board which makes no policy and raises no funds.

Almost every organization in America has some features and patterns which are matters of custom, or of "policy" as the school superintendent in the fable named it. These patterns—a list of officers to be elected each year, a roster of standing committees to be appointed, a board composed and selected in some particular way—are normally assumed as part of the unexamined social heritage of the organization. No one may know just how they contribute to the stated purposes and on-going program. When people question just how they do contribute, those of us responsible for keeping the organization going are tempted to get red-faced and defensive.

When leaders hear complaints about the gaps between their organization's objectives and its actual per-

formance, they may see these complaints as slurs on themselves as persons or on the people who are filling the offices, manning the committees and board, or staffing executive posts in the organization. Actually, the reasons for the gaps complained about probably don't stem primarily from faults and deficiencies in the characters or the commitments of the persons involved. They frequently stem basically from faults in the structure of the organization, in the definition of its offices and jobs, from poor communications among its parts, from inadequate training of personnel for special jobs, etc. Why then should leaders so often personalize criticisms of their organization? Perhaps part of the answer lies in the fact that most of us haven't learned to look at processes and problems of human organization objectively and critically. We have difficulty in sorting out features of our own organization which are unexamined inheritances from its history or unexamined borrowings from the patterns of other organizations, sometimes organizations with objectives and environments quite different from our own. The difficulty comes because the patterns of most organizations are so largely unexamined by those participating in them, so largely assumed rather than analyzed and tested against the realities of the organization's actual objectives and environment.

Perhaps a good way to begin learning to look at the facts of our own organization objectively is to face a fundamental question about human organization in general: What purpose does the deliberate organization of effort serve in human experience?

Organization arises when there are tasks to be done and problems to be solved which require the joint efforts of many people. When the division of labor required by a joint effort is simple, the necessary organization is also simple. When a dozen or so people got together on the American frontier to raise a house for a neighbor who had been through a destructive fire, organization of effort was required. But it was usually achieved with little conscious attention. The worthwhileness of the task was apparent to everyone taking part so there was no particular problem of motivation or apathy. The special resources and interests of each per-

son were pretty well-known to all the others so there was little problem of selecting and fitting the right person to the right job. The control system was simple because the main controls lay in the evident demands and requirements of the task to be done, not in the will of a psychologically remote board or executive committee. Communication among people working at different parts of the house-raising was easily achieved because everyone concerned could talk easily when talking things over was needed. Organization under these conditions could arise more or less spontaneously from the group and in direct relationship to the requirements of the situation faced.

As the functions to be performed by joint effort become more complex, as distinct jobs within the overall task become more specialized, the required organization of effort becomes more complex too. The same rudimentary problems of organization are still present—the motivation of people to participate, selection and fitting of people to jobs which fit their interests and abilities, the control and coordination of diverse activities, and communication among the parts. But solutions to these problems can no longer be improvised or determined in a town meeting of all those concerned. At such a point problems of organization, in addition to technical problems of the task to be done, become important in their own right. Offices and responsibilities need to be defined and some sort of system of selecting people to fill them devised. The autonomy of one part of the organization may become a threat to other parts and some recognized way of mediating differences among the parts will need to be instituted. The overall task of the organization may easily slip out of the view of people focusing on one particular part of it and the healthy motivation of helping to produce a fine joint product be lost in various parts of the organization.

Moreover, organizations which survive over a period of time tend to perpetuate themselves. They may have started originally as concerted human effort to meet some particular need, to solve some specific problem. But when the need is met, the problem solved, they don't automatically dissolve. At least part of the people working

in the organization are satisfying some of their personal needs through its activities. So they try to maintain the organization, to keep it from dissolution and death. Existing organizations find themselves looking for jobs to do instead of the jobs to be done drawing people together to effect the required organization of effort.

As organizations in a community multiply, often with overlapping jurisdictions, competition for members, for community visibility and prestige, for funds and resources becomes a social fact. Under these conditions, part of the efforts and resources of the organization goes into defense of the organization against other organizations, into competitive advertising, into making our organization look good and the others bad.

In a society so given to the formation of organizations as America, it is not at all surprising that a general model of organizational structure should become established in our culture. The structures of particular organizations do differ in detail. But there are marked similarities in pattern between American organizations, however different in objectives and program. If structure is thought of as means to serve objectives and implement program, this sameness in structure may actually indicate a source of organizational inefficiency. It may indicate that there has been too much dependence by particular organizations upon the general model.

Most of the complaints about organizations stem from misfits between organizational patterns and the tasks the organization is aiming to do. The tendency is for organizations to perpetuate their patterns without regard for the outside world they are trying to modify or influence in one way or another. How can we account for this tendency?

Suppose that an organization has developed a strictly hierachical structure. There are grades of personnel, ranging from mere members at the bottom, through committee members and committee chairmen, through officers, up to a remote board. (If there are hired staff people in the organization, they may not know just where they stand in the scheme of things. They may vary in role between paid servants of officers and board to tyrants operating behind the scenes.)

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Suppose also that the chief way of rewarding service in and to the organization comes from advancing people upward in the hierarchy of the organization. Within the world of the organization, this advancing is what success means. The world outside and effectiveness in dealing with it shrink away in importance. Self-promotion and self-justification become major goals, whether fully acknowledged or not, of individual members, of committees and committee chairmen, of officers. The energy that people give to the organization tends to drain into advancing themselves in the hierarchy rather than in a concerted attack upon problems in the world outside or in the study and manipulation of the environment necessary to solve these problems. Internal political operations, which are inescapable in any event, tend to eclipse and swallow up the task functions designated by the objectives of the organization.

The main point here is not that perpetuation and defense of an organization or that efforts of individuals to advance themselves in the organization are reprehensible. They are valid aspects of organizational functioning. They become problems only when they get out of balance with the task functions for which the organization professedly exists. We will be able to understand and deal with these and other imbalances effectively only as we learn to face the facts of human organization objectively and to understand dispassionately why organizations behave as they do.

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IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

How can the effectiveness of organizational life be increased? All kinds of organizations and agencies are working on this problem today. ADULT LEADERSHIP asked leaders in three widely different areas to describe how their organizations had successfully solved at least part of this general problem. All of our resource people have stressed the basic importance of spotting and developing new leadership as the key to organizational health. In this article, AL has drawn from these three descriptions tested strategies for identifying and training new leadership.

A LARGE national organization with local chapters, the American Jewish Congress, has had considerable experience in trying to solve the by-no-means unique problems of getting, keeping, and upgrading leaders. Julius Schatz, director of the Congress' Community Service Bureau, has described their problems as the "pre-natal and post-natal care and training of leadership—the eternally perplexing and confusing problems of committee members, board members, and officers of all and sundry organizations."

In an effort to meet these problems several American Jewish Congress chapters in New England, New Jersey, New York City, and Chicago have experimented with co-chairmanships to give new leaders the opportunity of learning by direct participation and work. As a result of these experiments, the Congress has determined that paired or shared chairmanships afford a special opportunity for fresh leadership to be brought into the life of the organization. The Congress has also found that the system of co-chairmen increases the reliability and the dependability of both members of the team, and in addition provides a basis for continuing leadership in the event that one of the members has to drop the job of chairman. The Congress urges its chapters, which are the basic local units of organization, to make use of co-chairmanships as "the best kind of organizational insurance against the permanent pestilences of *dead-wood, absentee leaderism, turnover,* and *eternal and lifetime office holders.*"

The Congress has encountered unusual success in training, maintaining, and upgrading leaders in Hartford, Chicago, and Philadelphia, in New Jersey, New England, and New York. This success, the Congress has found, depends directly on the ratio of hard work, sweat and toil put by existing leadership into teaching and training people, providing them with an intelligent framework and set of relationships, correlating their work to the total program and organizational structure, and providing incentive and bonus by the rich reward of successful events and activities. The Congress is now tackling the problem of refresher training, through all-day workshops and institutes for professional and lay leaders.

The American Jewish Congress' program "has not been a direct result of any major plan or project but rather a step-by-step accretion of periodic experiments and experiences." It does not obtain for the entire structure of the organization, but it is moving toward "overcoming the many large and small problems of leadership selection and training which are the bane of all organizational life in America today."

Spotting Leaders in Industry

Business and industry, too, have problems of finding and training and keeping leaders.

The Ansul Chemical Company, an industrial concern located in Wisconsin, is one organization that has tried hard to improve its methods of spotting potential leaders. When the production manager of the company's mechanical division ran into a problem in bringing out a new product, he needed to put a man in charge and needed to move quickly. Should he promote the assistant foreman? Or should he look for other possible leaders? The president and the personnel department believe that the men on the machines have part of the answer about how to get good foremen. So do men currently in foreman positions. So, of course, has management. How could workers and foremen as well as management be involved in determining who should fill a foreman position?

Management was asked to state the qualifications of foremen as it saw these. And management decided that the foreman position needed a man who was a good personnel man, a good technician, and a good housekeeper. He should also know production processes and have certain personal qualities. Management officials agreed with the personnel department that it would be a good idea for

workers and foremen to specify the qualifications of foremen in the same way, providing the process was to be used for recommending men to be considered for selection as foremen, not for the final selection.

The manager of the mechanical division set up several groups—foremen, assistant foremen, and about seven worker groups. To each group he said, "You tell us what the duties of a foreman are. What qualities should he have?"

Responses were analyzed and a composite chart was drawn up and presented. "These are the duties you the foremen, workers, and management said foremen should have. These are the qualities you said foremen need." Then workers, foremen, and management were given a list of all permanent employees. They were asked to put a (1) after the name of the man who most closely approached the type of man the chart indicated they wanted as foreman, a (2) after their second choice, and so on for five choices. They were told that this rating was only one phase in selecting foremen, and that the men who got the highest ratings would be given additional tests.

Six men were rated highest by management, foremen, and workers, although several others were rated high by one or another of the groups. Actual selections were then made from the six on the basis of further testing, interviewing, etc. The same procedure for getting data to select leadership personnel has since been used in the two other divisions of the company and has been excellent for building morale as well as for spotting effective leadership.

Who Should be on the Board?

In the downtown section of a large metropolitan community (Los Angeles), thirteen public and private youth agencies ten years ago "pooled their resources and knowledge" in order to provide better recreation and informal education services for young people. The Board of Directors was composed of the executives and presidents of the thirteen organizations.

The project was divided into ten sections. In one of these sections, the community of Pleasant Valley, there had been a long history of cultural conflicts between par-

ents and children. Many teen-agers had records of arrests (a large percentage for curfew violations). The community was populated largely by members of a minority group. Very few families owned their own homes and most of the workers were unskilled and semi-skilled laborers.

Three residents of Pleasant Valley called the office of the Youth Project, stating that they were concerned over their lack of recreation facilities. On the basis of these calls, a series of meetings were called, the first involving eight residents, four agency workers, the Housing Manager, and the District Playground Director. After several meetings, with the local group growing, and a conference of their steering committee with the city Superintendent of Recreation, a member, Mrs. Rezos, was chosen as permanent chairman of the steering committee. An evening meeting was planned so that fathers could be present. Thirty people attended and examined needs and problems. Over a period of time this community group accomplished many things, including a community night attended by over three hundred residents.

It was suggested that one of the residents of Pleasant Valley might give a report of their accomplishments to the area-wide Board of Directors made up of agency executives and presidents. Mrs. Orlando was selected for the job.

After hearing Mrs. Orlando's report, the Board of Directors decided that people like her should be on the board and that the residents of each of the ten geographic areas should be represented. Accordingly, the structure of the Board was changed to include residents of the areas so that the base of leadership could be wider and the Board be kept in closer touch with the people and with the needs of the whole community.

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CREATIVE BOARD LEADERSHIP

QUITE a bit of the distinctive drama of democracy takes place in the lowly board meeting. To the superficial eye the daily crop of tens of thousands of small gatherings in America (we estimate 50-75 thousand a day) are merely sedentary circles of bodies. But a deeper look sees more. It sees groups of human beings assembled to build, destroy, inspire, divide, foment, give form to dreams, compete, compromise, aspire. And through the medium of this throng of the good, the bad, the frequently mediocre, the sometimes excellent, the human spirit drives to accomplish far-reaching social objectives. Where these circles of people sit, invisible castles are taking shape, leaders are being formed, segments of our future are born.

The importance of all this is something to ponder over. The leaders of the ancients won support by their eloquence at the forums, by their valor in battle, by their personal magnetism. When Ben Franklin formed the Junto and the Junto sparked the formation of dozens of other bodies, he was contributing to the modern democracy of groups. The American process was under way. Leaders were called in from horseback to council chambers to decide matters by the jousts of minds. Town meetings, clubs, sects, lodges, associations flowered in the American soil. The methodology and the sociability of America became to a great extent a matter of groups. No doubt the enlarging of towns into cities contributed. People must live in small-scale social contexts, and when they lost their towns they formed clubs. Today there is an organized society of some sort for every hundred Americans, a grand roster of a million and a half. Count-

ing the boards of government agencies and of business, the number is still greater. And each of these has committees, boards, and the like.

Thus the matter of how boards, committees, groups are led and how they arrive at decisions and plan actions is a highly consequential matter to the American culture in general and to the democratic process in particular.

Any discussion of creative leadership in boards and committees today must begin with the recognition that the notion of a "leader apart" is largely of the past. Even where leadership can be narrowed down to a person, the chances are you must find him in the crowd with the news photoman's arrow. The curious things of leadership —initiative, force, decisiveness, persuasiveness, magnetism, foresight—are increasingly provided by a number of persons in a group. To an extent all may share. Even our personalities are undergoing a change as people cease to stand and declaim and learn to sit, listen, and compare.

We may be permitted some nostalgic feeling about the old days of William Jennings Bryan's Cross of Gold oratory. The incandescent lures. But there are better sources of light and heat, and the compound of modesty, courtesy, constructive wit, and open-mindedness we call shared leadership is one of these. Parenthetically, we note that the human ego is better nourished by team work than by stellar bursts.

Point one in creative leadership is that it is shared.

Point two is that the business of sharing ought to reach beyond the board to the constituents. We have two patterns of boards: the "fathers" and the "neighbors." The fathers are Olympian. The neighbors are our peers. We talk to them and they to us. The fathers are enamoured of their authority and their juridical role. Stuffiness becomes invested with virtue. "We will inform the people when we are ready." The people, having chosen them, should subside. Neighbors listen to the people and explain to the people. The board of neighbors becomes the switchboard in a continuous two-way exchange. The judicial and decision-making functions are performed in the full light of open discussion and constant communication. Both functions, in the case of the Quakers, are dependent upon "a meeting of minds," a practice that

may well be taken as the guiding principle for all sects and orders.

Shared leadership is creative for at least four reasons: one, it really leads; two, it enhances each person in a group; three, it promotes the richest admixture of thoughts and values; four, it can say "we."

The fathers-neighbors distinction crops up in a myriad ways. Recall the common lament, "I can't get it by my board." Or the perhaps unspoken sentiment of many board members about leg work chores, as if to say, "We have graduated from KP duty." The neighbor, by contrast, operates at ground level, retains his grip on the real, remembers that the diffusion, not the hogging, of prestige and credit is the elixir of democratic organization.

THE CASE OF XBURY

A case in the community of Xbury illustrates—by violation—several aspects of the principle.

The community council in this town of ten thousand voted a recreation survey and appointed a local chemical engineer and first-generation American, Hernandez, chairman of the survey committee. The committee tackled the job with a will. After some preliminary questionnaire and interview work they presented preliminary findings and a proposal to the Council board. The proposal was that the Legion, the P.T.A., and Kiwanis be invited to join the board in setting up the Xbury Citizens Committee on Recreation.

The comments of board members on this proposal were illuminating:

"We formed this survey committee as a Council subcommittee. It seems to me this proposal goes beyond the assignment."

"I feel, Mr. Chairman, that this is our project. This proposal would set up a rival organization."

"Perhaps the committee doesn't intend to run away with the ball, but it looks that way to me."

"Mr. Chairman, I move the control of this project be kept by the Council."

Two months later the board observed that there were no signs of further action and discontinued the commit-

tee without consulting the chairman. And tongues wagged. The gossip drifted back to Hernandez that some felt he was "too big for his britches," that his committee was "a flash in the pan," etc.

What's wrong with this picture?

Actually the "wrong" added up to a dozen deadly or venal sins. We offer this diagnosis of a few of them.

1. The deadliest sin was the failure to consider an individual's need for recognition. Hernandez was an obscure member of the community who accepted enthusiastically a chance to prove himself with his fellows. He was more than ordinarily self-conscious and sensitive because of his foreign origin. Quite naturally, the treatment he received drove him back to cover, and he hasn't been seen since at community affairs.

2. The board members revealed an institutional pride which prevented them from giving fair, objective consideration to an interagency proposal.

3. The board failed entirely to understand the creative springiness of the committee attitude and style of attack on the problem and to appreciate that this kind of motivation is beyond price and is a double crime to destroy. Had the board taken as its *base line* the principle of *appreciating live response* and *saying so*, it could then have gone far with the committee in exploring modifications of the report. But the base line was nearsighted, dull pomposity—and everything went wrong from there.

4. Boards, to be creative, must share decisiveness, prestige, and importance with their committees and constituents. In this case the board members' sense of their own importance prevented their seeing the needs of the other fellow and of the group. Examples of this, extreme but highly pertinent, occur in military organization. The "chain of command" would appear to belong to another world. But no. Corporals and captains are but souped up cases of the psychological situation we have been talking about. The bad officer sees himself and his importance. The good officer is in the most sensitive league with his people.

HARD MONEY–SOFT MONEY

Several important reflections on the whole question of vigorous creativity in a board cluster around a question we seldom ask: how do we combine tough mindedness with mellow mindedness? Without overtaxing the figure, how much of our currency is hard money, how much is soft money? Some have made the error of thinking that the Quaker "meeting of minds" is a soft and gentle process. People who think this way do not know the Quakers. The "meeting of minds" conjoins form with open inquiry. It has rigorous respect for the compass and functions within a tough context of value and experience. Integrity is not viewed as even briefly expendable.

The spirit of the discussion group, soft in some respects, is essential to the creative board. But the board adds hard roles that focus free discursive play. It has a responsibility for decision and for action. And this responsibility is no blank check. It is curbed by responsibility to its constituency and the need to translate to its constituency. Persuasion is a creative role of boards with a soft overtone. Yet persuasion actually is an unremitting and taxing business. The board that disciplines its will and skill to keep the story continually told is a board which knows the meaning of rigor.

Perhaps the principal case of the hard money emphasis is *factual operation*. By factual operation we mean much more than the ordinary sloganizing about "facts, facts, facts." We mean a radical change in the board's attack on its job. Normally we elect preconceptions and pre-emotions in congeries known as Brown, Smith, and McReilly and call them a board. Almost every board then learns a little about trimming its prejudices and vagaries in order to pull out some kind of rational action. It learns a little. It should learn much more. The hard money test of board creativity is whether it learns enough to move far beyond negative mediocrity into positive construction. This is the case preeminent in which the soft money business of pooling ignorances in a situation of starchless amicability is a sin against God and man. In plain truth, the hard money principle is that people don't move towards truth by counting hands, but by the scientific method wielded by a group.

Actually the iron of scientific method can be built into board practice only by a sustained complex of measures. We can dismiss most of the direct verbal approaches at the start: "Now, let's be factual," etc. Some of the obvious measures are:

1. Studying the facts on moot questions, hearing people of differing views and some of expert knowledge where possible.
2. Involving board members in "experiencing facts," not merely in hearing verbal reports on fact.
3. Testing generalizations against relevant facts and possible alternatives.

Boards suffer from such generalizations as "the farm group is apathetic," "the business man won't turn out," "the politicians are opposed to us," "the teenagers are irresponsible and destructive." Given enough of these false black-and-white identifications, a board will presently be unable to plan sensitively and skillfully about anything. Equally, or more, serious, the board will build around itself a bogey man throng of things-not-so which paralyze optimism and the will to do. In less extreme form, how many of us have not known the board member who says, "Nobody will volunteer," when the actual case is that in condition A with approach B, individual C will volunteer to work with a will on job D.

In all these matters the role of the skilled board leader is great. And there is perhaps no place where his skill will count for more than in his nurture of the board's habits and abilities in dealing with the world as-it-exactly-is: and in his capacity for revealing that the scientific method, tempered (or amplified, if you will) by human warmth and intuition, is man's great earthly hope.

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Building Committees *that Work*

With all the important things we do through committees, sometimes we seem to have an awful lot of trouble with them. They take so much of our time—and sometimes seem to get so little done! Committees have been described, by a frustrated member, as small groups of people which keep minutes and waste hours. And sometimes this description is a little too true for comfort.

Why Have Committees?

Committees are appointed, or elected or drafted, for a purpose. They have an assignment to do within a specified time. Committees have jobs to do—planning a series of programs, or studying traffic conditions, or working out agreements between a number of organizations, or settling grievances, or developing better working relationships between units in a business, a governmental agency or a voluntary organization.

One requirement for improving the work of the committees that demand so much of our time and energy, and on which we depend for so much work, is that THE PURPOSE OF THE COMMITTEE SHOULD BE CLEARLY DEFINED. The appointing authority, whether the president, the chairman or the membership, should define the purpose of the committee, spell out its job, its responsibilities and duties. The committee's limits should be detailed, too—the time span for which it is appointed, its budget, if any, how far it is supposed to go and where it is expected to stop.

Too often appointing authorities respond to the suggestion, "Let's appoint a committee," without answering the question, "Why?" How can a committee work effectively if it doesn't know what it is supposed to do?

Is This Committee Necessary?

Sometimes the suggestion, "Let's appoint a committee," should be answered with: "Let's not!" Many committees should never have been appointed. And it is past time that others should be re-examined and their purposes redefined. Too many of our organizations have dangling committees and dead-but-unburied committees, committees that wander in the wilderness and committees that shoot off in the dark. Sometimes we give a committee a task that could be done better by one person. And sometimes we give one an assignment assuming a settled policy where it hasn't been settled—a policy that can be decided only by the whole organization or the board of directors.

We appoint committees for many different reasons, to do many different jobs. To define the purpose of any specific committee, it may place it in relation to the kinds of functions which committees are often called upon to perform. Here is a classification of functions frequently performed by committees for an organization:

KINDS OF COMMITTEES

Functions performed	*Examples*
Administrative	personnel finance membership
Advisory	policy technical
Exploratory and fact finding	study survey
Coordinating	inter-agency
Review	budget
Program	education recreation
Activity	campaign project
Judicial	grievance hearings
Inspection	citizens' committee for state hospitals. etc.

A clear view of the functions of a committee should help to define its assignments and spell out the specific jobs it is to do. Confusion as to functions and vagueness as to assignments leads to floundering.

Choosing Committee Members

A committee may be composed of members of the organization, representatives of groups within the organization, specialists or consultants from the outside, or representatives of a number of organizations or representatives of the entire community. The functions of the committee should determine the composition of the group.

As to number, cynics have said that the ideal size of a committee is three—with two out of town. This, of course, misses the reason for having committees in the first place, which is to enable several persons to pool their resources, experiences and interests in solving a problem or doing a job, which one person couldn't do as well.

Here again, the specific purpose of the committee should guide. If, for example, the committee's purpose is to advise on the welfare department's medical program, does it not need medical specialists? Its members will probably include representatives of the local medical society, public and private hospitals, pediatricians, obstetricians, gynecologists, dentists, druggists, nursing home operators, etc. It will also include persons who represent the philosophy of the agency and who know the laws, rules, procedures and policies under which it operates. Other public or private agencies might be involved. And the public should be interested and concerned. It is easy to see that the number and kinds of persons on this kind of committee are largely dictated by its job. If any one segment (in this example say the hospitals) were left out, the committee couldn't work effectively.

The ideal size for a committee depends on its functions. The executive committee of a local association might best be three or four. A state-wide education committee, on the other hand, might need 25 or more members. These questions of composition and size, again, point back to the importance of clearly defining the committee's purpose in the first place.

Depending on its job, the committee may require among its membership men or women with specific competencies or backgrounds. Or it may require that certain special interests, groups of people or points of view be represented. One committee might require labor and management representatives, another production and office personnel, another Protestant and Catholic and Jewish members, another property owners and renters, another persons from various nationality groups. And within any one group, various segments and interests may need to be represented on a committee—people from the West Side and the East Side, people for and against the one-way street proposal, people who back Jones and people who back Smith, people who want to have the annual convention in Central City and people who want to have it in Camp Owasso. A committee cannot effectively perform its job unless its membership includes all the persons necessary to carry out that job.

In order to keep factors of functions, assignment, composition and size in mind, some appointing authorities fill out a form, "Data for your Committee" for each committee authorized and appointed. The form may be made out in duplicate. One copy is given to the committee chairman, the other retained by the appointing authority.

DATA FOR YOUR COMMITTEE

Committee's name Recreation Committee
Function Fact-finding
Specific purpose Survey use made of parks
Assignment To submit report to Board
Time of reporting By November 21
Composition Representatives of Welfare Dept., public schools, Youth Commission, Park Dept.
Size Seven members
Chairman Tom Freedley

How To Pick A Chairman

It might prove helpful in this business of picking a chairman to ask the question: How do you define the chairman's job? Some of the readings at the end of this Tool Kit suggest the following approach to the chairman's job. How does it fit in with yours?

The Chairman's Job

1. The chairman is the stimulator (not the dictator).
2. His job is to see that the committee develops a common view of its purposes and shared responsibility for leadership.
3. He sees the chairmanship as a part of a team made up of:
   a. a chairman (or, at times, another discussion leader)
   b. a blackboard member
   c. a recorder
   d. an observer
   e. others as needed
4. His aim is to utilize the interests and release the potential energies of all the members.

A consideration of what you hope a chairman will do may help you pick the kind of person you want for chairman, and help you orient him to his job.

In view of the job spelled out for the committee, what should the chairman be able to do? Get things done? Make decisions? Stimulate others? Inspire them? Know the right answers?

It is a temptation to think only of the man who gets things done, or of the reliable, conscientious woman, when a chairman is being selected.

But let's look again at what we want the chairman to do. And then look at the qualifications required.

In selecting committee chairmen, some people find it useful to consider personal characteristics, such as:

1. has a personal record of being a consistent worker who completed a job
2. is enthusiastic
3. has background knowledge of the organization's (or institution's) aims, and the committee's functions

4. is hard-working
5. is good-humored
6. is quick
7. is a good executive
8. is persuasive

Others, bearing in mind the definition of the chairman's job, find it more useful to look at his qualifications in this way:

1. has confidence in other members
2. wants to release the potential energy of the group
3. is willing to give up the chairman's traditional prerogatives if the job requires it
4. is more interested in the committee's job than in his own feeling of personal importance

These lists of qualifications point to one way of helping committees improve their performance—by selecting the right kind of chairman. They suggest that committees can work better if they operate democratically, with democratic leadership and with members really sharing in making decisions and carrying them out. In this view the good chairman is one who can work with people, who can stimulate them rather than browbeat them and can help the group use all the abilities and experiences its members possess and new ones too that they develop as they work together.

Orienting The Chairman

Busy people have often permitted themselves to be drafted, against their better judgment, to chair a committee—by other busy people who lightly insist, "There's nothing to it. . . . You won't have to do anything. . . . Just come to meetings. . . . You know all about it. . . . John Jones (or Mrs Jones) wants *you*," and "It won't take much time."

But *do* you know all about it? Do you know what the job will be? And what is, or should be expected of you? How are you going to do it, how far should you go and where should you stop?

True, in many organizations, committee assignments are pretty routine. All the members of the Boat Club know what the Dock Committee is supposed to do. Everybody knows that the Parent Club's Social Committee ar-

ranges for the food (while the Chowder Society's Social Committee arranges the annual stag party).

But we are interested in improving the work of committees, not just in perpetuating a committee system.

More attention to orientation for committee chairmen should pay off. The board, executive committee, president, or whoever appoints the chairman, should explore the job with him, go over the reasons why it was set up, and what is expected of it. The chairman should understand whether the committee is supposed to explore a problem, find or develop resources, find facts, suggest solutions, plan a program, make recommendations, deliver a report, or what. The chairman should also know where the committee fits into the organization, the relation of its work to the rest of the program, and what will likely be done with its reports, recommendations or other products. He should be given any suggestions or leads that have been developed, advised where to turn if the committee gets stuck on something, and informed on what budget will be available (if any), and the time within which the committee is scheduled to complete its work.

Many organizations have found it productive to bring their chairmen together in groups for leadership training. In such groups the chairmen can relate the work of their committees to the overall philosophy and program of the organization and can work together on common problems of chairmanship—such as building agenda or leading discussions.

Orienting The Members

After the purpose of the committee has been carefully spelled out and its assignment defined, its composition and size determined, its chairman appointed and oriented and its members selected, it is time for it to get down to work. If it is to do its job effectively, the members as well as the chairman need orientation. They, too, need to know the purpose of the committee, understand its specific assignment and what is expected of it. This job of orienting members usually falls to the chairman. It is usually started when the members are recruited and continued in the first or first few meetings of the committee.

The process of orientation leads into defining problems, setting immediate goals, deciding on next steps and setting up expectations.

The Committee's Agenda

The committee's agenda is an important tool in the orientation of members and in enabling the group to work effectively. And the way the agenda is arrived at is important to the way the committee functions. The committee as a group, the chairman, and each member all have a stake in the committee's agenda.

How the Agenda Can Help

1. For the committee as a whole the agenda can make it easier to:
   - *a.* expedite effective production
   - *b.* protect from introduction of items not germane to the purpose of this meeting
   - *c.* protect from introduction of items group is not ready to discuss
   - *d.* give order and direction to its work
   - *e.* indicate relationship of items
2. For the leader the agenda can help to:
   - *a.* plan the work to be done
   - *b.* allot the available time to necessary items
   - *c.* set a permissive atmosphere
   - *d.* give an opportunity to distribute leadership in the group
   - *e.* provide a meeting plan satisfactory to the group
   - *f.* gain acceptance as a member of the group
3. For the member the agenda can help to:
   - *a.* give opportunity to bring items before the group
   - *b.* serve as guide for participation
   - *c.* offer opportunity to play on the team
   - *d.* show the relationship of parts

Some Problems of Agenda Building

The committee is apt to run into a number of problems in building its agenda and working with it. Members may have conflicting interests, and the committees always seem to have more things that need to be done than they

have time for. If the group refuses to turn some down, they must 1) work overtime, 2) never get through their agenda, or 3) rush through everything without enough time for important items.

Preparing the agenda is a crucial step in improving committee functioning and in protecting the stakes of the committee, the chairman and the members in it. All committee members should have a chance to take part in preparing the agenda, from the first step of suggesting items to the final step of deciding the agenda that is adopted.

Building the Agenda

The committee agenda is built of items suggested by the members, the chairman, other committees, the president or the board of directors. Suggestions might come from persons outside the organization. And some items are required by the committee's assignment and the stage of work it is in.

For good committee participation and performance it is important to ask the members for suggestions. One method that is often used is to ask them to submit suggestions by mail. Some groups have found that this method is made more effective if members are asked not only to submit items they would like to see on the agenda, but if they are also asked to indicate whether each item, in their opinion, can be handled quickly or will require considerable consideration and discussion. Members are also asked to indicate any informational resources that will be needed for adequate consideration of the items they suggest.

When all suggestions are in, the chairman makes up a tentative agenda, listing items in the order in which he feels they should be taken up and indicating whether they are for quick decision or extended discussion, whether they should be referred to a sub-group, and the resources that will be needed to deal with them. This tentative agenda is mailed to members before the meeting. If time permits, they are requested to send in their reactions and further suggestions.

At the meeting, the committee discusses the tentative agenda and as a group decides which items should

be included for this meeting and which held over, which assigned to sub-committees, the order in which items will be considered and how much time should be spent on each.

If this process is followed, every member of the committee can have a full part in determining what the committee will work on and how. Each will have a chance to bring up the problems or suggestions that he feels are important. And the final agenda is not the chairman's alone, but the whole committee's.

The Committee At Work

Committees are set up to do jobs for the organization as a whole. A committee can reflect or reproduce all the unproductive difficulties of the parent organization—or develop unproductive difficulties of its own—unless its assignment is clearly defined, its membership includes the necessary individuals, and unless its organization and operation are democratic.

The accompanying Committee Check List gives some important guides for effective committee operation.

Any one committee may do its work in a number of ways. At committee meetings, the members *plan* jointly. They all take part in committee discussions and decisions.

But they may actually do the work by individual assignments, sub-committees, teams, or pairs, or by combinations of these either during or between meetings. It is not necessary, and probably not desirable, to have the whole committee interview the mayor, or write a report or compose a letter. Individuals or teams may compose questionnaires, conduct surveys, compile and analyze answers or figures, make telephone calls, etc.

Often there is a tendency for the chairman to discharge too many individual assignments himself, instead of spreading the work—and the leadership.

Your Committee Check List

1. Is the place of meeting comfortable, accessible, attractive?
2. Does the committee understand its assignment?
3. Is the agenda carefully planned and thoughtfully worked out by the whole committee?
4. Do the members transact their business with dispatch?

5. Does the committee have representation of differences of viewpoint and diversity of belief?
6. Is there healthy competition of ideas?
7. Do the members feel they really "belong," are "a part of," and think of it as "their" committee?
8. Is the committee responsible in that it is willing to be accountable to the appointing authority?
9. Does the committee spread its work assignments?
10. Can the committee make constructive use of conflict, opposition or criticism?
11. Is the committee flexible and adaptable?
12. Does the committee obtain the facts, study and analyze them, make decisions as a result of full discussion—and then take appropriate action?
13. Do the members feel that time is used wisely and sense real achievement?
14. Does the meeting start and stop on time?

A Committee Work Record chart can be used as an aid, by the chairman and the entire committee, to develop a picture of committee assignments and work progress. It can also help the committee see which members, if any, are being overlooked and not permitted, or required, to participate as fully as they should.

COMMITTEE WORK RECORD				
COMMITTEE TASKS	Who worked on this?			
	Mrs. D	Mr. B	Miss R.	Mr. X
Preparing Budget	✓		✓	✓
Making Program Study		✓		
Writing Annual Report		✓		✓
Etc.				

Members Have Responsibility, Too

A committee is more than a collection of individuals. Whether around a conference table or a kitchen table, over a period of time committee members must learn to work together as a group.

For a committee to function effectively, the members must accept responsibility. The next time that you say, "That was a poor committee meeting," perhaps you should ask, "What did I do to try to make it better?"

It might be well for an organization to consider a code of committee member responsibility. For just as chairmen too often are pushed into leadership jobs with such arguments as: "There's nothing to it," and "It won't take much time," so people are pushed into accepting committee membership assignments—when a moment's reflection would show that they do not have the time and energy to give to the job.

A member has as much responsibility as the chairman for the success of a committee. In "Constructive Community Committees" in the April, 1953 issue of *The Y.W.C.A. Magazine*, Harleigh B. Trecker spells out some of the responsibilities of a committee member. He writes:

"Do I just go to a committee meeting as I might go to the movies or on an excursion? Of course not. When I work on a committee I am—

—exercising my right and my responsibility for democratic self expression.

—sharing in doing a task that needs to be done and can be done better by a group.

—giving of my ideas, my opinions, my feelings, my convictions with reference to the task.

—getting helpful ideas from others who are likewise focusing on the job to be done.

—testing my ideas against the varying experience of others.

—learning the necessity of give and take as the discussion develops.

—carrying responsibility in a thoughtful manner in behalf of the whole group.

—thinking out loud and developing my thoughts in the company of others.

—creating a common unity of purpose and understanding.

—deciding upon the best course of action."

To carry out these responsibilities well a committee member needs certain knowledges, attitudes, and abilities. Your answers to the following questions may give you clues as to where your own qualifications for committee membership can be strengthened:

Committee Member Check List

1. Am I familiar with and sympathetic toward the aims and methods of the parent organization which created the committee?
2. Can I express myself easily and clearly and enjoy the give and take of exchanging ideas with others?
3. Do I have reasonably good focus, a sense of direction and a sense of timing, plus a willingness to stick to the task at hand?
4. Am I receptive, open-minded and able to learn and to receive stimulation from others?
5. Do I have vision and perspective which enables me to see the present in terms of the future?
6. Am I fundamentally cooperative and seeking after agreement and unity?
7. Am I able to arrive at decisions and face their implications?

To be effective, committee members should be able to attend meetings regularly. They should seek to understand the committee assignment and work to complete it. Members should participate in the deliberations and discussions and should share the responsibility of sticking to the subject and trying to understand and use the ideas of other members. They should help in reaching committee decisions, in committee action and in following up the final disposition of its work. Committee members should also evaluate their own contributions to the committee and share the responsibility for evaluating the work of the committee as a whole.

Such evaluation is not limited to looking back at the committee's work after it is over, though that is important too. Whenever the committee bogs down or gets lost, members as well as the chairman should share the responsibility for asking the committee to stop a while in order to find out why, and to decide on the basis of their analysis how to work better in the future.

Follow Through

Sometimes a committee is set up, a chairman appointed, members recruited—and then the whole thing is forgotten by the appointing authority until it's time to appoint committees again. The committee may do the job for which it was organized in the first place—or it may

not. Or it may find that its report is no longer needed, or its work was wasted. Or the committee may have started out all right and then have gone way off the track.

For a committee to produce effectively, the apointing authority must perform a supervisory function. The president or the board or someone must accept the responsibility of following through with the committee as it works.

It is the responsibility of the organization to make effective use of what the committee prodaces. Too often men and women spend weeks and months conscientiously conducting surveys and studies and evaluations—only to have their reports stuffed in a file to gather dust. The organization, when it makes the committee assignment, should know why it wants this particular job done and what it will do with the results. The committee should have this information and should be kept up to date on how its work is followed up.

The committee is set up to do a job for the organization—to plan ladies night or stage a golf tournament or set up criteria for selecting plant foremen. Because committees do so much of the work of organizations, and because they demand so much of members' time, it is important that they do their jobs well. Clear definition of the committee's assignment, careful attention to the selection and orientation of the chairman and the members, the use of democratic methods in building the agenda and carrying on the work of the committee, and intelligent supervision and follow up should pay off in more efficient and more effective committees.

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"Any of you birds want to be on a committee?"

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THE GROUP AT WORK

The factors affecting the work of a group can be divided into five general areas:

- Climate
- Involvement
- Interaction
- Cohesion
- Task requirements

This classification is rather artificial, for the factors in any one area are usually interacting with factors in other areas. However, almost any logical classification makes the observation and analysis of group procedures a bit easier to do.

climate

Let's talk first about the physical climate—the place of the meeting. This includes the size of the room, type of seating, ventilation, and freedom from distractions. The atmosphere may be influenced by the brightness and cheerfulness of the room and, perhaps, by a connotation of the usual function of the room.

For example, meeting in the plush board-of-directors room might create quite a different group feeling than meeting in the empty gym. The meeting place should also be conducive to the interaction of group members. This usually means meeting around a table or at least having the chairs in a loose circle.

Meetings have emotional climates too. A climate that is friendly and informal, that accepts the members and permits them to express their ideas, and makes them secure enough not to feel hurt if their suggestions are rejected, is most conducive to high level work. This emotional climate is created by the members themselves. In

a healthy climate members are conscious of the feelings of other members and they use their skill in promoting harmonious relations.

Playing down inequalities of status also helps develop the atmosphere where all feel free to participate, suggest ideas, and disagree with others. Using first names sometimes helps people to be less conscious of status. The emotional climate of a group is best built by people really getting to know each other.

To be more specific, a healthy emotional climate can be created and maintained when members concentrate on:

1. Being receptive to (though not necessarily agreeing with) the ideas of other members.
2. Being friendly and considerate.
3. Encouraging everyone to feel free to participate in the discussion.
4. Easing tension within the group and mediating personal conflicts.
5. Analyzing ideas rather than giving value judgments (calling them good or bad).

Involvement

To form an opinion about the involvement of a group it is helpful to ask: Why are the members here? Is the group attractive to them? Why? How much stake do the members have in the outcome of the problems discussed?

The involvement of members varies from meeting to meeting. It depends on the members' interest in the topic under discussion and on their freedom from outside distractions. To some extent involvement can be estimated from the rate of absences, late arrivals, and the turnover of group members.

There are several ways in which involvement can be increased. Members are attracted to groups that are friendly, that give prestige, that accomplish things worthy of recognition and, in general, meet their personal needs and interests. It is useful, then, to emphasize and dramatize the various sources of attraction for the members. Pointing out the accomplishments of the group, helping the group to have fun in its work, and securing recognition for its work from outside sources are typical examples.

Involvement can be increased from within the group by helping the members play more active roles. This can be done by rotating the jobs of chairman and recorder, spreading out jobs of planning and work on committees, and by asking members frequently for ideas and suggestions.

A post-meeting reaction questionnaire may be found of value in diagnosing the intensity of involvement. This questionnaire may be an elaborate rating scale that allows the members to register degrees of opinion. Or it may be a slip of paper circulated to members at the close of a meeting asking a few simple questions: "What did you expect this meeting to accomplish?" What do you consider the strengths and weaknesses of this meeting?" "What could have been done to make the meeting more successful?" "What do you suggest for the next meeting?"

Such questionnaires have the effect of clarifying the objectives of the group since all members are able to express themselves freely. A regular questionnaire helps keep the group in touch with the feelings of its members and presents a channel for all to have a say in the group's agenda and procedures. Many things which the group is reluctant to talk about will be revealed in an anonymous questionnaire.

Interaction

A study of the interaction pattern of a group shows a great deal about the effects of the size of the group, of status or position differences, and of problem members (over-participators and under-participators). An analysis of the different contributions shows whether they were relevant to the task at hand, or whether they were contributions which helped build and maintain the group. It also shows whether a few members were carrying the ball or whether all were participating and sharing leadership and responsibility.

The size of the group is important. It should contain all the people necessary to do the job that needs to be done. If the group is large—say 20 members—and meets only for an hour, it is going to be difficult for all to participate. A group that is organized to exchange information can be a lot larger than a problem-solving and decision-making group. Some research has sug-

gested that six to 10 or 12 is the best number for a problem solving group. If the group is very much larger, then techniques and procedures adapted to large group meetings should be used. As the size of the group grows, the problems of communication become increasingly difficult.

Differences in status among members often adversely affect interaction in the group. People in high status positions tend to talk more and have their ideas more readily accepted. Other members usually address them when they are talking. A great deal of interaction centers about these high status members. A group that recognizes this tendency can push for a balance by (1) encouraging low status members to participate, and (2) by trying to analyze everyone's contribution on its own merit.

A study of the interaction patterns of a group also reveals the "problem members". These may be the over-participators or dominators, and the under-participators. They may also be the blockers, the disgressors, the special interest pleaders, and the withdrawn members. Helping these members become aware of the effects of their behavior on the group is often a big step toward working out their problems.

cohesion

The degree of cohesion or "groupness" is directly related to the involvement of the members. Some groups, however, may have a high degree of cohesion based on mutual friendship, and the members may not be involved in the work of the group. A certain amount of groupness or cohesion within a group makes two valuable contributions to that group's well-being.

First, it maintains the group. A group with low cohesion is liable to stop meeting, have a high rate of turnover and absences, or just disintegrate. And second, a cohesive group can develop standards of teamwork which have a strong influence over the behavior of its members. A group with low cohesion is often unable to reach consensus or make decisions because members do not feel obliged to moderate their individual positions in the interest of securing agreement and common action.

When members know and understand each other,

there is likely to be good cohesion. Such groups are more productive because, for one thing, members are able to communicate more easily and effectively. A group that is able to discuss problems of morale and face its conflicts is best able to deal with threats to its cohesion. In general, cohesion is developed in much the same way as a healthy emotional climate is created, and as the involvement of members is increased. A special, friendly, get-to-know-each-other time can contribute to the development of cohesion. A coffee-break is a case in point.

the task

The procedures and methods used by a group have much to do with its effectiveness. A good place to start is with the goals of the meeting. These goals should be common to the group members. Each member should have an opportunity to contribute to the goals, and care should be taken to see that those who don't contribute to the goals at least understand them.

Next, some sort of flexible plan should be developed for reaching the goals that the group decides upon. It is useful if the group is acquainted with different procedures for communication, study, and decision-making which are appropriate for various needs. These may include a free discussion, a business session, a speech, a case study, a review of research or observations, a panel or symposium, role playing, buzz groups, use of visual aids, or some combination of these.

From time to time it is important to evaluate the movement of the group toward its goals and the effectiveness of its procedures. Goals may be carried over from one meeting to the next, perhaps in the form of agenda items. It is helpful if each meeting is planned ahead of time, though the agenda should be subject to change at the next meeting in case important things have come up between times. A check should be made at each meeting to see if the decisions of the last meeting were carried out.

Many groups in their discussion of problems find it helpful to follow a pattern of (1) diagnosing, (2) suggesting solutions, and (3) reaching decisions. The group may even appoint a member (if this is not the recognized task of the chairman) to make sure that this pat-

tern is followed and that the discussion does not get off the track.

the chairman

Work is more easily accomplished if the group has a designated chairman or leader. Experimental studies have demonstrated that groups with a chairman are more effective than groups without, even though the chairman may have skills no greater than the other members. It is generally agreed, too, that groups operate more efficiently with a recorder. The chairman and recorder do not need to be the same person at each meeting. Many groups find it satisfactory to rotate the two jobs among the members.

The tasks of the chairman and recorder are described in many different ways. In general, the work of the chairman is seen to consist of:

1. Opening and closing the meeting.
2. Helping the group define and focus on the problem.
3. Helping the group set limits about what can be covered in the time available.
4. Keeping the discussion focused on the problem.
5. Drawing out the quiet person and keeping the dominant person from monopolizing a discussion.
6. Reflecting and clarifying the ideas of members.

the recorder

The work of the recorder consists chiefly of keeping a written record of what is said. The recorder's role is often seen as a co-leadership function. The recorder acts as the memory of the group and helps the chairman keep track of where the group is in its discussion. He also sorts contributions to a discussion into their appropriate place and reminds the group of these contributions by frequent summaries. The recorder is in a good position to ask for clarification of ideas and point out where the discussion is getting off the track.

Other members of the group should share these responsibilities with the chairman and recorder and not leave everything up to them. An analysis of the function of the group's chairman and recorder with these suggested tasks in mind can shed a lot of light on possible areas of leadership improvement.

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ADVICE ON ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The growth of advisory committees during the past several years has been phenomenal. Few institutions of social control have multiplied as rapidly. Privately run community organizations use them—the "Y", the Scouts, the fund drives. They have proved valuable to public school principals and municipal and state officials. The Federal government with its multifarious activities has thousands of them.

The pity is, that with all its virtues, the advisory committee should so often be misunderstood, neglected, or misused. Clearly, what is needed is fuller appreciation of both its potentialities and its limitations—and a heightened awareness of how it can most effectively be used.

why it is important

The reason every program leader or administrator gives when he creates an advisory committee is that he wants advice. Often this is the most economical and convenient method of obtaining it. Frequently, men and women whose main interests lie elsewhere are willing to spend a few hours each week or month as members of an advisory group. Advice and recommendations which would sell at a high price in the world of business are thus made available to the program for little or no actual outlay. Scientists, lawyers, businessmen, and engineers—to name a few—have shown a willingness to contribute in this way to the public good.

The advice that a committee is able to give is not confined to the substance of the program. It is also important as a guide to public opinion—what the public wants done, what it will be likely to accept, and what it will not. This is why the representatives of important interests are so often invited to serve. At the community level, this may include the church groups, the League of Women Voters, and the service clubs. At the national

level, it is the Farm Bureau, the labor unions, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Sir Arthur Salter had this in mind when he spoke of the committee as "an invaluable instrument for breaking administrative measures on the back of the public." This is an important service, as any conscientious but hard-pressed executive knows—an opportunity for hoisting trial balloons in private.

But advice is only the beginning. Advisory committees can often help to achieve agreement in controversial subject areas. As members get to know and respect each other, they grow more tolerant of differing views. And persons who agree on broad objectives can usually come to agree on methods as well.

Pooling their resources of information and judgment, they will frequently be able to accomplish together what might be out of reach for them individually. Moreover, the well-informed good will that a committee often generates can be a potent instrument for interpreting the program to the public. It is not necessary for the advisory committee to endorse everything the organization does, or, for that matter, to support it at all. Explaining its point of view and participating in public information programs is useful.

No hard and fast distinctions exist between advising and doing, and many a capable leader has asked for help from his advisors in the performance of such internal assignments as the making of tours of inspection, or the preparation of special studies. Committee members are also an important source of potential administrative talent. Because of their experience with the program, they can sometimes step easily into executive positions in it.

other uses and abuses

The advisory committee has certain tangential uses no thoughtful program leader will overlook. It is made to order for the person who neither wants nor desires a full-time assignment, but does "want to do something." By its nature—i.e., the giving of advice—the advisory committee connotes prestige. It is an unusual leader who will not use it at times to bestow largesse. As one said: "We didn't want Joe in the program, but

we couldn't leave him out. That's why we put him on our advisory board." In the governmental area, it is sometimes used for patronage.

Yet, despite all these uses, many program leaders —perhaps most—see their advisory committee only as a means of obtaining support. They appoint it with this in mind and are disappointed if it doesn't deliver. The members are selected on a calculated basis, their prestige weighed and their pliability assessed. At the community level, the process is attended by such remarks as "So-and-so will help us" and "we'll certainly need the support of the Everyman's League"—as if it could be easily bought and sold. The process is no different at the national level. But the game is bigger and the plotters more ingenious.

Wanting support, however, is a far cry from getting it; and the man who creates an advisory committee may have no talent for using it. Indeed, it may come to be a hindrance both to him and the program. This is why it is prudent to examine some of the risks that may be involved.

dangers—

Fortunately, the dangers inherent in the use of advisory committees are often so slow in evolving that the committee will have run its course before real trouble develops. Nevertheless, they should be weighed before the committee is created. If they outweigh the advantages, the advisory committee should never be set up.

Risks are probably less at the community than at the state or national levels. For one thing, local people know each other more intimately. Also, the stakes are less. Something of minor consequence to a local grange leader may be of primary importance to the national master.

But, local or national, it is always possible that a major difference of opinion will develop between the advisory committee and the leadership of the program it is to advise. Sometimes this will remain a family secret; sometimes it will result in a kind of compromise; but sometimes it will burst forth to rock the community.

When James F. Byrnes, the Director of War Mobil-

ization and Reconversion, broke with his advisory board, the bang could be heard around the nation. On a lesser scale, the disagreement of an advisory committee with a superintendent of schools on a school building program can have far reaching implications.

There is another reason why administrators may be reluctant to have advisory committees. They may be apprehensive that the committee will meddle in the administrative affairs of their organization—and there is no doubt that some of them do.

Many times, the existence of a committee serves as a brake on effective action—one more obstacle which the administrator must hurdle. And sometimes, even, the committee will impede, rather than facilitate, popular support for a program. This last possibility is usually overlooked entirely.

There is also the danger that members will seek to use their committee positions to serve personal (or non-organization) ends. One Washington administrator complained that members of a high level governmental advisory committee sought, on taking office, to get "a telephone to the White House" before they had even concerned themselves with the business before them. Granting some exaggeration, it is clear that there are people who will be tempted to turn to personal advantage the associations—and perhaps some of the information—they acquire while serving on an advisory committee.

how to make it work

It is proper at this point to ask what can be done to make the advisory committee a useful and effective device of social control.

In the first place, the committee must never be thought of primarily in terms of the support its members can give. This is an error as fatal as it is tempting. The support of the members of an advisory committee is a by-product, not an objective, of the program—a reward, never a purpose.

For the full value of the advisory committee to be obtained, certain steps must be taken. The committee, for example, must have a clearly understood function. Its size must be related to what it is to do, its members selected with care. Its meetings must be thoughtfully

planned and organized. There must be voluntary participation. Finally, there must be follow-up. Let us see how all this can be achieved.

First off, the committee must be wanted. Moreover, it must be wanted by the person it is to advise. This may sound like fatuous advice. Actually, many committees (most?) in government are handed down from one administrator to another; the new administrator does not even get to choose the members. Small wonder that it is often shunted into the background and never really used.

In the community, many programs have advisory committees because it is expected of them. The leader may not want them, but others do. In such cases the chances that they will make much of a contribution are not great.

do they know why they're here?

Many of the problems and some of the dangers in the use of advisory committees stem from a failure of members to know what is expected of them. This does not necessarily mean a written definition of function, although one is certainly to be recommended. It does mean, however, a real understanding of what will be involved.

Is the committee one whose advice is being seriously sought? Or is the word "advisory" the window dressing to capitalize on the members' prestige? Is assistance wanted, or only moral support? If the latter, perhaps some other term than "advisory committee" should be used. "Patrons and patronesses" have found favor in many circumstances. An older term is "board of visitors."

Most men and women who accept advisory committee assignment today are sophisticated enough to understand some of the implications of their selection. They know that they are chosen for their prestige and influence as well as their expertise. Their major reservation is that not too much of a burden be placed upon them, either time-wise or policy-wise. Ordinarily they will not make an issue of it if their advice is not followed.

There are exceptions, of course. These most frequently come about when members feel misled or pre-

sumed upon; or when they have been openly antagonized by those conducting the program. Even so, an explosion is by no means inevitable. More often than not, disgruntled members swallow their differences—and their pride—and merge quietly into the background. But if sufficiently inflamed, they are capable of rebellion; and any leader who has faced this situation will not want it repeated.

who should be members?

It is a maxim that "members should be selected with care." Put into context, this means that the members should be men and women of reasonable manner and approach, whatever their views. The professional publicity seeker should be shunned. Too often his objectives and those of the other committee members will fail to coincide.

Those who have appointing authority will do well to consider variety of interest. Harold Laski believed that the best committees contained some members who could look at the problem in its technical and special aspects, and others who could consider it in its broader framework. Whatever else, if it is a working committee, the members selected must have the time and inclination to keep informed, and to do whatever else is necessary. As Eric Johnston once pointed out, "one-hour members are not enough."

how big a committee?

The size of the committee will depend upon what it is expected to do and how frequently it is to meet. An active committee, meeting often, needs to be smaller than one that is less active and meets only two or three times a year. It is relatively easy to get five to seven people together. When the number gets larger, some difficulty is encountered since each member assumes less relative importance. His absence is less noticeable, and he views his part in the committee's affairs as of less consequence.

An English authority suggests that a committee of 32 can conveniently meet three times a year; one of 16, six times, and one of eight, 12 times. But there is no inflexible rule. (The State Department currently has

one, the UNESCO Advisory Committee, with nearly 100 on it, that has managed for several years now.)

how much self-rule?

In many instances, committee members select their own chairman, or he is appointed from among them. This is often regarded as proof of the committee's independence and something to be desired.

There is growing support, however, for the view that the chairman should be an official of the agency or the program. The members advise *him*. There is nothing unwholesome or undemocratic about this arrangement. It emphasizes unitary control and minimizes duality of leadership.

In important committees, the secretary, as chief administrative officer of the group, assumes a major role. Much of the preparation for the meetings will fall to him; he will also be an important factor in establishing effective chairman-member relationships. For these reasons he should report to the chairman. If he is permitted to be independent (i.e., report to the "whole committee") he, too, can become a separate and perhaps divisive force.

in conducting the meeting—

Much has been learned during the past several years concerning group behavior. Generally, this has been applied to "working" committees—those with authority to reach conclusions and the responsibility for carrying them out. But the new knowledge is also applicable to advisory groups. Unfortunately, little has been done about putting it to work.

Too often an advisory committee's advice is not really asked. Or perhaps the chairman asks questions around the circle, as one would in a schoolroom—posed questions, transparent and barren. Members find themselves agreeing because there is no other line to take.

Many chairmen are unwilling to ask real questions. There is the lurking fear that, somehow, a committee opinion will commit them. Under such circumstances committee meetings become a cat-and-mouse affair whose real purpose does not escape the members. To use his committee effectively, the chairman need not feel that he must place even a major portion of his

problems before it. This would needlessly burden the committee—and dilute his own responsibilities.

But he should be willing to tell the committee of the problems he is facing; to ask it leading and significant questions concerning both policy and procedure in the area of its competence; and later, to indicate to it what he has done. If there is a meeting of minds on objectives, and if members are convinced of the chairman's good faith, open proffers of aid will usually be forthcoming.

"Perhaps we can give you some help here"; or "I'll be glad to talk to so-and-so, if you want me to," are typical examples.

An agenda distributed in advance will help to bring committee and program closer together. Most committees—like the man whose tombstone said, "He et what was sot before him"—are willing to confine themselves to the agenda which has been prepared. This gives the thoughtful planner an important tool for leadership.

"How" or "whether" questions are generally good ones because they indicate interest in the member's views. Frequently the committee will need background information. Much of this can be presented in formal papers prepared for the members' study.

"Dry runs" or rehearsals are to be encouraged. Most people like to appear before committees, but they often tend to lecture them. Also, they would rather defend their own decisions than present a matter for someone else's advice.

After suffering through dozens of such government "briefings," one high level labor leader observed pointedly: "By now we must be the best educated blankety-blank bunch of private citizens in the United States." He was conspicuous for his absenteeism from then on. The moral of this should not be overlooked.

The secretary in *out-of-meeting* solicitation of members' views can also play an important part. It is a mistake to believe that only the fully assembled group can accomplish anything.

If the committee is a formal one, a record should be kept of its activities. A report to the members of what occurred, with additional information concerning the action (if any) that is taken by the administrator in putting the advice to use, is also desirable.

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FOR FURTHER STUDY

(Order direct from publisher indicated)

THE ART OF BOARD MEMBERSHIP. *By* [illegible] *New York: Association Press, 1950.* A concise guide to good practice.

BETTER BOARD MEETINGS. *By Mary Swain Routzahn. National Publicity Council for Health and Welfare Services, 257 Fourth Ave., New York, 1952.* Practical suggestions for better board functioning.

GROUP PROCESS IN ADMINISTRATION. *By* [illegible] *Trecker. New York: Women's Press, 1950.* Application of group work principles to organizational management.

HOW TO BE A BETTER MEMBER. *By* [illegible] *New York: New American Library, 1956.* Offers suggestions for effective participation in any kind of organization.

HANDBOOK FOR LEADERS OF ORGANIZATIONS. *Carrie Chapman Catt Memorial Fund, Inc., 461 Fourth Ave., New York, 1956.* Workable [illegible] and ideas for all phases of organizational [illegible]

HOW TO DEVELOP BETTER LEADERS. *By Hruda and Malcolm Knowles. New York: Association Press, 1955.* Ways to train leaders in work [illegible] Chronological [illegible]

WHAT MAKES A VOLUNTEER? *Public Affairs Pamphlet #224. Public Affairs Pamphlets, 22 E. 38th St., New York.*

THE DYNAMICS OF GROUPS AT WORK. *By* [illegible] *A. Thelen. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954.*